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Understanding women’s empowerment: the role of husbands

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Throughout history and across nations still today, men on average are superior to women in terms of power.¹ Especially in developing nations patriarchy and gender inequality are still prevalent.² Empowering women is seen as important step to accelerate economic development^{3,4} and as one of the central issues in the process of sustainable development for many nations worldwide⁵

This research defines women’s empowerment and investigates the relation between different components.



Women’s empowerment

“The expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437)⁶

Women’s empowerment entails a process from being un-empowered to becoming empowered^{6,7}

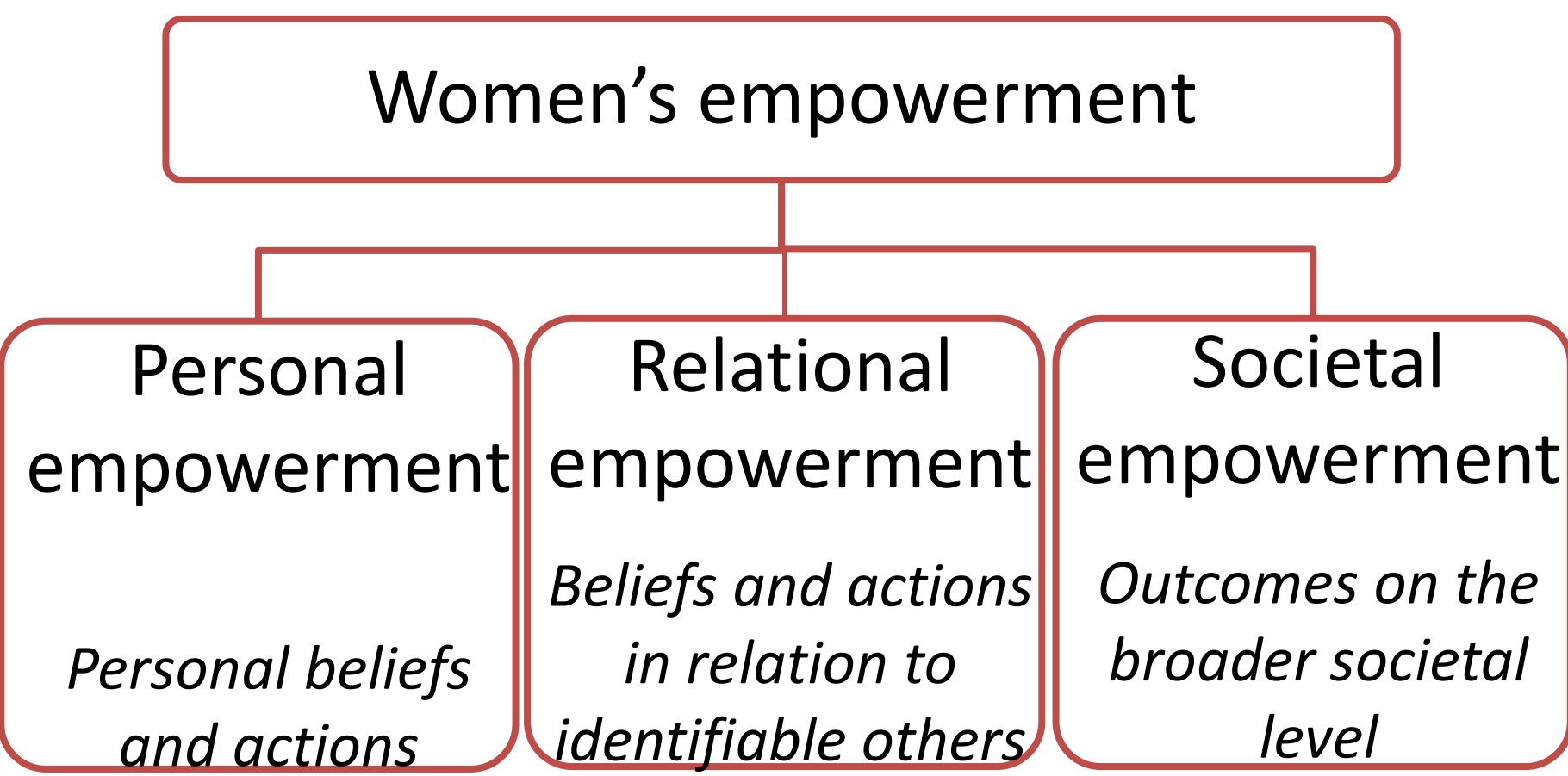
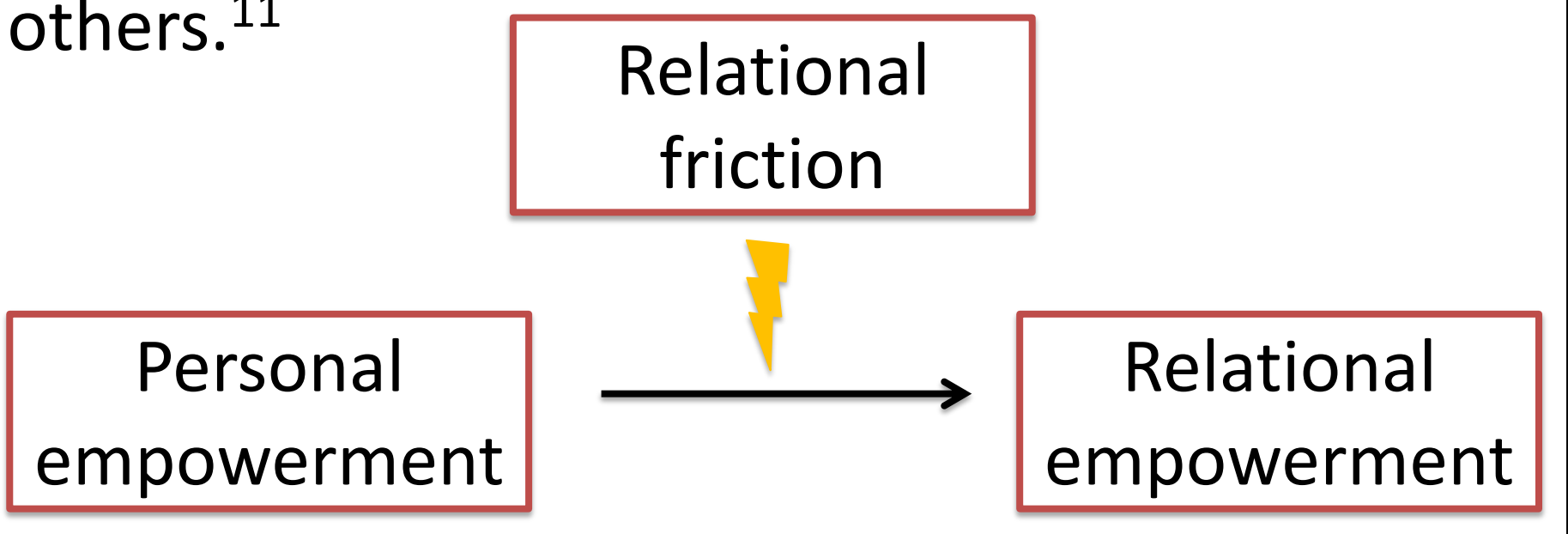


Figure 1. Women Empowerment Model⁸

Personal & Relational empowerment

Economic development alone cannot result in the development of women’s empowerment.^{3,4} To achieve change towards more equality, both parties of the relationship need to be involved.⁹

The pathways through which the process of women’s empowerment occurs it shaped by specific contexts¹⁰ and strongly influenced by laws, social norms and cultural practices.³ People in collectivistic societies give meaning to their identity through relationships with others.¹¹

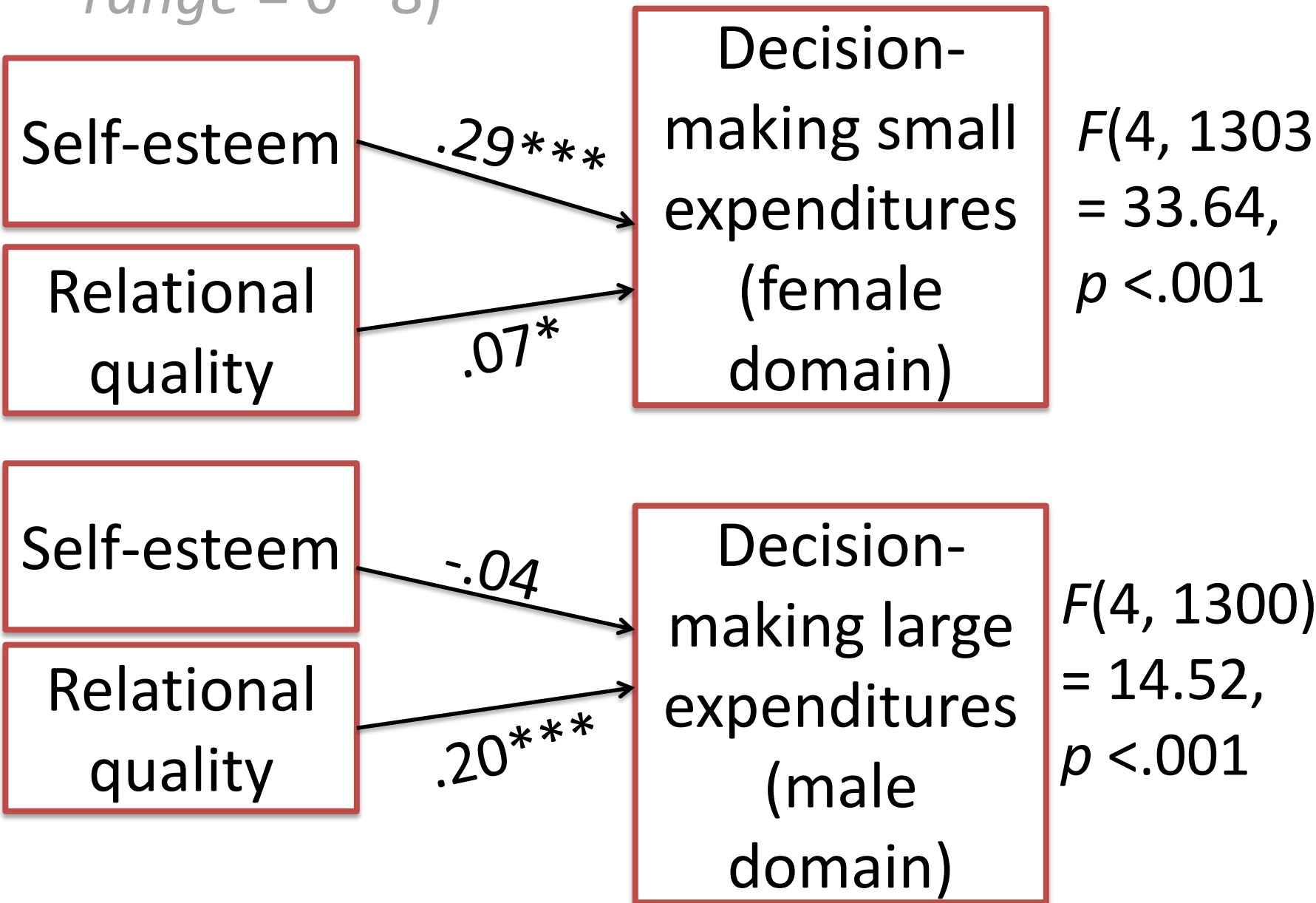


Study

Sample: 1509 Vietnamese female entrepreneurs ($M_{age} = 44.7$, $SD = 10.0$)

Main measures:

- *Self-esteem* (Rosenberg, 1965) e.g., I am able to do things as well as most other people (6 items; $M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.68$, $range = 1 - 5$)
- *Relational quality* (Straus, 1979; WHO, 2005) e.g., How often did your spouse physically assault you in the last six months? (Reversed: 4 items; $M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.41$, $range = 1 - 5$)
- *Decision making power* (Banerjee et al., 2015) Small expenditures: e.g., Who makes most decisions about what food items to purchase? (3 items; $M = 2.42$, $SD = 0.69$, $range = 0 - 3$) Large expenditures: e.g., Who makes most decisions about where to invest surplus money? (8 items; $M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.58$, $range = 0 - 8$)



Controlling for age and educational level

Conclusion

- To understand women’s empowerment it is important to differentiate between personal, relational, and societal levels.
- Relational dynamics are crucial in the development of women’s empowerment.

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